

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for containerlessly packaging non-woven safety garments, comprising:

a) at least partially filling a pressing cavity having a predetermined orthorhombic parallelepiped shape with non-woven safety garments;

b) applying isostatic pressure to the cavity to compact the garments into a compressed mass;

c) wrapping the compressed mass; ~~and~~

d) gusseting the compressed mass; and

~~de~~) removing the compressed mass from the cavity;

wherein the wrapped compressed mass is substantially orthorhombic parallelepiped-shaped;

wherein the gusseting assists in retention of the substantially orthorhombic parallelepiped-shaped.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein after a) and before ~~de~~) a partial vacuum is applied to the pressing cavity.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a partial vacuum is generated in the pressing cavity during c).

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the isostatic pressure is about 80 PSI.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the pressing cavity is substantially cubic.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the pressing cavity has the shape of an orthorhombic parallelepiped.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the nonwoven garments are formed of a spunbond/melt blown/melt blown/spunbond material.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the volume of the cavity is at least about 4500 square inches, the mass load of the cavity is about 10 pounds, and the applied isostatic compression force is about 80 PSI.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the compressed mass is twice wrapped.

10. (Withdrawn) A method of packaging nonwoven safety garments, comprising:
- compressing a nonwoven safety garment item having an associated uncompressed loose density to a compressed density corresponding to about 2 to about 5 times the loose density; and
- maintaining the safety garment item compressed density by means of packaging; wherein the packaging defines a substantially rectangular parallelepiped shape.
11. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10 further comprising pulling a partial vacuum on the nonwoven safety garment.
12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11 wherein the nonwoven safety garment is compressed with a force of about 80 PSI.

13. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for compressively packaging safety garments to form stackable wrapped blocks, comprising:

a rectangular parallelepiped compression chamber;

an isostatic ram operationally connected to the compression chamber for applying a compression force thereinto;

a vacuum pump fluidically connected to the compression chamber; and

an assembly for wrapping compressed rectangular parallelepiped blocks operationally coupled to the compression chamber.

14. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the isostatic ram is adapted to apply a compressive force of at least about 80 PSI kilograms per cubic centimeter.

15. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the isostatic ram is adapted to apply a compressive force of between about 50 PSI and about 120 PSI kilograms per cubic centimeter.

16. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the compression chamber is has a volume of between about 4500 cubic inches and 8100 cubic inches.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 13 wherein the compression chamber is adapted to produce compressed rectangular parallelepiped blocks having dimensions of about 16 inches by about 14 inches by about 12 inches.

18. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for packaging safety garments, comprising:
a rectangular parallelepiped compression chamber;
means for isostatically compressing contents of the compression chamber;
means for wrapping the contents of the compression chamber; and
means for generating a partial vacuum within the compression chamber.

19. (Withdrawn) A boxless stackable block of prepackaged nonwoven safety garments, comprising:
a compressed block of nonwoven safety garments; and
at least one layer of polymer wrapping material enclosing the compressed block of nonwoven safety garments;
wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material defines a generally rectangular parallelepiped shape; and
wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping materials exerts a force onto the compressed block sufficient to maintain compression.

20. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material is substantially non-porous.

21. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material is polyethylene and wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material is about 4 mils thick.

22. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material is polyester film.

23. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the at least one layer of polymer wrapping material includes a plurality of layers.

24. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein one of the plurality of layers is a gusset layer and wherein the gusset layer reinforces the rectangular parallelepiped shape.

25. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the compressed block of safety garments is substantially free of entrapped air.

26. (Withdrawn) The block of claim 19 wherein the compressed block has a volume of about 2700 cubic inches and a mass of about 10 pounds.

27. (New) The method of claim 1 and further comprising the step of f) stacking the substantially orthorhombic parallelepiped-shaped gusseted compressed mass atop other substantially orthorhombic parallelepiped-shaped gusseted compressed masses; wherein the stacked substantially orthorhombic parallelepiped-shaped gusseted compressed masses substantially retain their shapes.

28. (New) A method for producing stackable blocks of wrapped non-woven safety garments, comprising:

a) at least partially filling a pressing cavity having a predetermined block shape with non-woven safety garments;

b) applying isostatic pressure to the cavity to compact the garments into a compressed block;

c) wrapping the compressed block with a first layer of nonshedding wrapping material;

d) gusseting the compressed block with a second layer of nonshedding wrapping material;

e) removing the compressed block from the cavity;

f) stacking the compressed block with other substantially identical compressed blocks to produce a stack of compressed blocks; and

g) shipping the stack of compressed blocks;

wherein the wrapped compressed block substantially retains the shape of the pressing cavity; and

wherein the stacked compressed blocks substantially retain their shape during shipping.

29. (New) A method of producing, shipping and storing stackable blocks of containerless wrapped non-woven safety garments, comprising:

a) placing a plurality of non-woven safety garments into a pressing cavity defining a predetermined block shape;

b) isostatically compacting the garments into a compressed block;

c) wrapping the compressed block with a first layer of wrapping material;

d) gusseting the compressed block with a second layer of wrapping material;

e) removing the compressed block from the cavity;

f) stacking the compressed block with other substantially identical compressed blocks to produce a stack of compressed blocks;

g) shipping the stack of compressed blocks; and

h) storing the compressed blocks;

wherein compressed blocks substantially retain their predetermined shape;

wherein the stacked compressed blocks substantially retain their predetermined shape during shipping;

wherein the stacked compressed blocks substantially retain their predetermined shape during storage; and

wherein unwrapping the wrapped compressed blocks produces substantially no particulate shedding.